

Political History Collection
Interview H.0026.01 : Tape 1

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Interviewed by: Paljor Tsarong
Name: Gyedong Tsering [Tib. rgyas stong tshe ring]
Gender: Male
Age: ca. 80
Date of Birth: ca. 1913

Abstract

(Amdo) Gyedong Tsering [Tib. (A mdo) rgyas stong tshe ring] was a trader who was originally from Amdo. He was involved in the 2nd People's Association and with Jenkhentsisum in India. In this interview, he discusses the 1st People's Association of 1952 and the detention of the leaders of the 2nd People's Association in 1956. He explains how he travelled to India carrying the documents of the 2nd People's Association to Jenkhentsisum, and how he brought the protest leaflets that were thrown out during the 1956 Mönlam Prayer Festival in Lhasa from Jenkhentsisum in India. He talks about political disagreements with Ngabö and a lack of trust about when the Dalai Lama would return to Tibet. He also details the 2nd People's Association and their rituals for the Dalai Lama and their political connections. Finally, he describes distributing leaflets from Darjeeling and the members of the Dedön Tshogpa Association.

Tape 1

Q: In 1950, Chamdo was lost. After that the Dalai Lama went to Yadong. Then by sea those who were discussing the 17-Point Agreement came to Yadong and then the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa. So during this time where were you?

A: I was at Lhasa. At that time our the People's Association had not arisen. The later People's Association had not started. I was a trader and took things like wool from Lhasa to India and from India I brought cloth and necessary things to Lhasa. From 1952, the (1st) People's Association arose. While we were out trading, the People's Association started, but it was difficult [for em] to do much since we had to trade to make a living. So secretly we [the 2nd Association] rose up and we said that we could not live under the "Chinese oppression" and that we are independent and that the Chinese have to return, so we had a lot of meetings. Finally, we met in Andrutsang's [Tib. a 'brug tshang] house and we went to hand a petition to the Chinese. At that time, we had quite a lot of the members in the People's Association. The persons who went to give the petition were Alo Chöndze, Bumtang Trunyi [Tib. 'bum thang drung yig] and Shigatse Lhabju [Tib. lha phyug]. [Note: He is actually talking about the 2nd People's Association].

Q: Lhabju?

A: Yes. He was an elderly person. Later he died in the police regiment. So the 3 went to submit the petition and at that time the main Chinese were at Yuthok. You remember Yuthok? The petition was handed there and the Chinese were really angry and said that all this is ridiculous. Then they finally said that they are going to arrest them. But they did not do that for a while. Finally, when the People's Association was getting more active and more popular, then the Chinese said that they are going to arrest them. From our Tibetan government side, we had secret relations with the Kungö [government officials]. They told the Chinese, "It would not be good for you to arrest them since there will be a lot of disturbances among the Lhasa people and things will not be good. We, the Tibetan government will arrest them and put them in the prison. So it was supposed to be that our government arrested us and they were imprisoned. I wonder when that was. Maybe it was 55-56. No it was 53-54.

[Note: it was 1956] Before that, the Dalai Lama went to China. At that time our the People's Association were not allowed to do much. There were the government officials [in power] and the People's Association were not allowed to do much. So the People's Association got together and went down to receive the Dalai Lama in China. In the first reception committee or denshu I went along with Alo Chöndze as the representatives of the People's Association and there were also one or two Khambas. From Tsang there was Bisu [Tib. spel zur] and a Shigatse monk and the abbots of the three great monasteries. We went up to Dartsedo and waited there for about 22 days since we heard the Dalai Lama was coming up. Then we spoke with the kungö (government

officials) and said that we are going wherever the Dalai Lama then was and we went to Chengdu. At that time, the kungö didn't dare to go without government orders. So we said that if you guys do not want to go, we are people who have volunteered from Lhasa, so we will go. So all of us representatives went. At that time, there was Alo Chöndze, myself, Bisu, a Triu Khamba [Tib. tre hor khams pa], a monk from Shelkar [Tib. shel dkar]. There were about 5-6 of us who went from Dartsedo. When we left, a cable had come from Chengdu. What we had heard was that from Chengdu they [Chinese] were once again taking the Dalai Lama down to China. So we said we have to go to protest verbally [Tib. skad rgyag] and so we went. When we got to Ya'an [Ch. ya an], the Dalai Lama was coming up come from Chengdu and we met him at Yangan.

Q: So what you heard was that the Dalai Lama was being taken down from Chengdu again?

A: Yes. We were suspicious about that and so we said we have to go to protest. But this was not the case, and the Chinese were going to let him come up. Then at Yangan we met Dalai Lama and so everything was alright. We, the People's Association had 3 reception committees. The 1st was ours and it went to China [to receive the Dalai Lama]. The 2nd went up to Chamdo and the 3rd went near to Ganden Shöl. So this was done like celebrations. From Dartsedo we were with the Dalai Lama's party and at Tau Nyitso [Tib. rta'u nyi tsho ?] Monastery we stayed one night. Then the Dalai Lama said, "The the People's Association representatives can go ahead if you like. So from Tau Nyitso we returned back. When we got to Chamdo, the 2nd reception was there. Later, the Dalai Lama received a grand reception and we could bring back the Dalai Lama very nicely. At that time, the abbots of the three monasteries and [lay official] Shatra Sey [Tib. bshad sgra sras] and many others were with us.

At Lhasa, we, the People's Association, did the tenshug [Tib. brtan bzhugs] ritual for the long life of the Dalai Lama. I think it was around 1954 or so. We were traders and we didn't check the auspicious days and things like that. So we just did the ritual for the long life of the Dalai Lama. Like this, the situation kind of calmed down. But the People's Association was saying that it won't do for the Chinese to stay in Tibet. So in this way, the petition was handed to the Chinese. Later, the Chinese made a lot of problems saying that they are going to imprison the people who handed over the petition. I think it was about 1955. At Lhasa, there was a police regiment and they were locked up in there. The police regiment and the house where we were staying at Shakabpa were very close. At first I made all the connections with them in the police regiment. The reason being that I knew all the neighbors and it was easy for me to go. They were just put into prison, but they did not face hardships because our Tibetan government was looking after them, right? If they got into the Chinese hands, then we don't know what was going to happen, right? Later, from India, Jenkhentsisum's [Tib. gcen khan rtsis gsum] connection was being done mainly by Kungö Phala in Norbulinga. At Norbulinga, Phala was shouldering the main responsibility. Our People's Association was protesting against the Chinese and we had a lot of documents. There were more than half of a load of documents. At that time, we received a letter from India saying that all of the documents should be brought to India and also some the People's Association representatives should come to India. So we talked at the police regiment [with the detainees]. Now if we have to go to India then we have to leave Lhasa, right? Which meant leaving Lhasa and leaving one's wife and children and so that was very difficult, right? But we had made a pledge and we swore to fight the Chinese in all matters. Now since we made the pledge if we now say we are not doing it, then we will be breaking the pledge, right? So it was very difficult to find people to go because it was at a time when the trade was brisk. So finally, I had to agree and I said, "Formerly when we started the organization we had made a pledge and swore that no matter how good or bad things may get, we will be united and we will do the things [that are needed]. So today, since everybody has told me [to go], I will go. But in order for me to go to India. since I am a trader I have a lot of money to collect as well as loans to repay and so I need to stay at Lhasa for at least two months. You know I have to give up [returning to] Lhasa and go." So they were all very happy. In the prison, there was Alo Chöndze, Bumtang Trunyi and Shigatse Lhabju.

Q: So they were in the prison?

A: Yes. I spoke with them and promised to go in about two months. About a month and a half later, all my money transactions were well completed. I had my wife and children at Lhasa. So I got the People's Association documents which were more than half of a load. There were a lot. I was one who was mainly responsible for bringing it to India.

Q: Now what documents were these, were these government documents?

A: No, no. They were those documents of the People's Association. There were letters of protest that had been sent from various regions. Finally, the letters got into my hands. They were packed like religious texts and loaded on a mule. The more important documents were wrapped around my waist. And so I left Lhasa. I had a little money and I took some money and left some money for my wife and kids to use. So in this way, I came to India. When the People's Association that came earlier [was done] one [leader] was caught at Shigatse because the secret had leaked out. There was this Kongpo person that the Chinese arrested and imprisoned, but no documents were discovered. He was imprisoned for more that 10 years, but We don't know where he was imprisoned. Oh! his name is Kamekang Chöndze [Tib. dkar ma khang chos mdzad].

Q: The one that was imprisoned?

A: Yes. He was taken and nobody knew where he was taken. Then, after 10 years, since no letters were discovered, he was let go. Now since I had to go that way, it was a great responsibility. So I was very worried, thinking that I might get caught at Shigatse. I got to Shigatse and stayed there for about 2-3 days. There were no vehicles [to take me] to Phari, so while at Shigatse there were a lot of Chinese passing by where I was lodging and so I was very worried that I might get caught. When the documents were being brought [to India], the only people who knew about this were the 3 in the prison, and Andru Gombo Tashi [Tib. a 'brug mgon po bkra shis] and Traya Atru Lama [Tib. brag g.yab a gru? bla ma]. Only the 6 of us knew. I said, "Wherever I go the secret can only be leaked out by the five of you. So if it would be leaked out, the five of you are responsible. I am sacrificing my life and going." We were able to keep the secret very well. At Shigatse, I stayed for 2-3 days and there were a lot of Chinese about. So I was very frightened that the Chinese might arrest me. At that time, I had an excellent automatic Mauser pistol. I always had it with me while I was sleeping or standing. I thought if I would be caught I would kill as many Chinese as possible and I would then have to sacrifice my own life, right? But nothing happened at Shigatse. I managed to get a vehicle and went to Phari. Then I was thinking that I might get caught at Phari. It was a tense situation, right? But even at Phari I was not caught and I stayed for 4-5

days. Then at Yadong there was a border control post and a lot of Chinese soldiers were there. So I was thinking that they might catch me there. So at various places I worried since I had this responsibility. But I was not caught. Then I stayed at Chumbithang [Tib. chu 'bi thang] for one night and then I would cross the Nathula [Tib. sna stod la] Mountain pass the next day. I couldn't sleep very well because I was thinking that the Chinese may be chasing after me. I got up early the next morning and left my saddle and things with the muleteer. I said, "I'm feeling cold and so I'm going ahead walking and so you come with the animals." So I went ahead and when I reached the top of Nathula I was so relieved and peaceful since I was not caught. And so I came to Kalimpong via Gangtok in this way. I delivered all the People's Association documents to Jenkhentsisum. I was given a book with a list of all the documents that was signed by Kungö Khenjung, Shakabpa and Gyalo Thondup. Until last year or the year before, I did not show it to anyone. I did not even report it to the Dalai Lama. In this document, there were the names of about 20 volunteers who said that they are going to sacrifice their lives for the Tibetan cause. Except for Alo Chöndze, Bisu and myself, all are dead. Finally, two years ago I had an audience with the Dalai Lama and I showed him the list of the documents and said that these are the documents when the People's Association first met and decided to protest against the Chinese. Except for 3 of us, everyone is dead. Then I gave him the book which listed all the documents. The Dalai Lama asked me, "Where are all the documents"? I said that Kungö Shakabpa told me that he gave all the documents to the Private Office [of the Dalai Lama]. I just gave them to the 3 kungö and then I had no [business with them]. So he said, "Just leave the book with me and I will find out about the documents." So the book with the documents list is with the Dalai Lama. So the Dalai Lama looked at this book well and he returned it to me with his blessings. Since it was about the hard work that we did, the Dalai Lama returned it to me. The book with the document list is with the Dalai Lama and I did not request he return it to me. [Note: he was confused about this] Later, it was said that the documents were not at the Private Office and that it may be that they were with the Kashag. So I don't know what transpired. As for the main list of documents, I gave it to the Dalai Lama's own hands. If I would get it back that's it, if not, then, he is the main owner of everything [Tib. don gyi bdag po] isn't it?

Q: Last time, I had an audience with the Dalai Lama regarding history and I met Kungö Tarala [Tib. rta ra lags] in Dharamsala. I am looking for some documents, so I can ask around. Maybe Kungö Tarala might know.

A: I don't know about Kungö Tarala, but I gave it to the Dalai Lama's own hands. I don't know whether it is at the Kashag or not.

Q: How long has it been?

A: I brought them in 1956 and then I did not return. I gave up Lhasa, right? Usually, all the documents were with Alo Chöndze. At Lhasa we lived close by, so one night Alo Chöndze brought all the documents to my house and there were a lot of documents. After Alo Chöndze was arrested, some of the People's Association got excited and asked Alo Chöndze about the documents. He told them that there was nothing to worry since he had handed them safely over to Gyedong. So some of the People's Association were really scared and they came to my house a few times. They said that Alo Chöndze had handed the documents to you, so what have you done with them. When one says documents, there was the main oath [Tib. gen rgya] document which was sealed by all the members. I thought to myself, "This lousy Alo Chöndze. How could he have said that to them because it would become like he was handing me over to the Chinese." So I said, "Alo Chöndze, the main person did not dare to keep them and handed them to me. So how could I dare to keep them? So I burned them." So they said, "Oh! now it is alright, it is alright. You did well!" They were scared, right? They couldn't be blamed, isn't it? Then about 3-4 of them like Amdo Lekshey [Tib. legs bshad], Amji Anela [Tib. am chi a nan lags], a Tiu Khamba Getob Targye [Tib. dge stobs dar rgyas], and a Tiu Khamba Chöndze Kare came to see me every 2-3 days and I said the same thing. So they said that that was excellent. They were scared, right? They were not to be blamed. Actually, how could I burn them? Even if I would lose my life, I would shoulder my main responsibility, right? Finally, the documents were brought [to India] and given to the Dedön Tshogpa [Tib. bde don tshogs pa]. Then I just hung around in Kalimpong. But when the Dalai Lama came to India for pilgrimage, we [People's representatives] went everywhere to Bombay, Delhi and requested him not to return to Tibet. Finally he had to go back.

Q: During this time, some Khamba traders were going to start a battle in Yadong or Sharsingma [Tib. shar sing ma], right?

A: It was not like that. Do you mean the guerilla war?

Q: A sort of war. If a fight could be started then the Dalai Lama could not return, right? So something like that. They got prepared to start a fight. Later, it was said that they didn't need to go. Regarding this, what have you heard? What did they agree to do?

A: It was really not a war. If the Dalai Lama was brought back to Tibet, there were some really bad people among the Kudrak. There was a plan to get rid of some of these kudrak not at Yadong, but around Nathula and the Indian border area. If they did it, it was possible. However, finally, the Panchen Lama and Ngabö did not come to Nathula. Instead they backtracked and went down to Siliguri from where they returned [to Lhasa] by air. Again the secret leaked out. So there was no disturbance. At this time, from China, Premier Zhou Enlai arrived suddenly. He said that the Dalai Lama needs to return to Tibet and if he did not, then we are going to continue our policy. A lot of harsh words were spoken and he behaved very forceful. Finally, the Dalai Lama had to return and we, the Dedön Tshogpa [exile Association], went all over Delhi to demonstrate saying that we need help and that we have no power. From today's perspective it is said that it may have helped, but on the other hand it was a waste of money. It didn't help any and we also put in a lot of hard work. Anyway, it would be helpful for our next lives because we worked hard for our people and for our government and we didn't do it for our own stomachs. So we stayed like that in Kalimpong.

Finally, Tibet was lost and the Dalai Lama had to come to India in 1959. So since then the Dedön Tshogpa Association was abolished. Since the Dalai Lama was here, they kind of offered the Association to the Dalai Lama and he took the responsibility. Then I did not have any work in the Association. So I stayed in Kalimpong just hanging around and playing dice and mahjong. There wasn't much trade since the road to Tibet was closed. So that is sort of my story.

Q: Somebody mentioned to me that Jenkhentsisum and others said that if the Dalai Lama stayed in India this time, it was a good opportunity. Ngabö and other's were saying that it is better to go back, right? Some say that they heard that at that time they were going to kill Ngabö and others. After that, when I interviewed some people, some were saying that at Yadong and Sharsingma they had agreed to start a sort of war. A message was sent to Lhasa to Andru Jinda and to the Tibetan Military Headquarters (Tib.

magji legung [Tib. dmag spyi las khungs]). And it was said the Tibetan Military Headquarters did not accept doing this. So this was about starting a fight. Were they talking about killing Ngabö and some other Kudrak?

A: It seems so. But this was a secret thing and in this we were not in it. That was a separate thing. Later, the secret leaked out and so Ngabö and Panchen Lama did not go to [Nathula] and went down to Siliguri and went in a plane.

Q: Otherwise, they were going to take the land route?

A: Yes, otherwise, they were supposed to go with the Dalai Lama, but since the secret had been leaked out they were not able to go. That was the reason why they had to take the plane.

Q: In 1956, you came to Kalimpong with the documents. Did Jenkhentsisum need the documents in India?

A: No. Among them you had to look for what was helpful. One had to see how strong the people in Tibet were supporting the People's Association. Therefore, I delivered the documents to them. At that time, Jenkhentsisum was there. Then there was Kungö Pejö [Tib. dpal chos]. There were the 3 monk officials.

Q: Gyantse Pejö Thubden Nyinjila [Tib. thub bstan nyin byed], right?

A: Yes. And then there was Champa Wangdü [Tib. byams pa dbang 'dus] and Champa Tsündrö [Tib. byams pa brtson 'grus]. They came via Bhutan. So they examined the documents and did whatever [it was that needed to be done] and we didn't have any involvement in that. I just handed over the documents. We don't know anything, right? Even the letters of petition to the UN was made in Tibet, but how useful could that be? It will not be useful, right? But we the People's Association did not know that. I think today the Kashag might have the documents, but the Private Office does not have them. I did enquire.

Q: Now, the People's Association that you are talking about is the 2nd one, right? And when it started, how did it work. In whose house did you meet? So when you first started, you might have had some discussions, right?

A: It was called the 2nd the People's Association. It began in this way. We started by saying that we wanted to perform a ritual for the Dalai Lama.

Q: Do you mean the "long life" ritual?

A: Yes. The long life ritual and also other rituals and we said that the People's Association had to get together. So that's how the People's Association was able to gathered together. Otherwise, it was difficult to begin an association in any fashion. And so some who were trustworthy began to confide in each other and began speaking about opposing the Chinese. I think we did the ritual sometime in 1952- 1953. But we never took notice of dates. If we had noted the dates, today we will be able to say clearly, right? But that was not work style of the People's Association work. It was all disorderly and rash [Tib. to ro mo ro].

Q: Was it just rituals or was it the golden throne?

A: From performing rituals, the people will donate money and so we did the ritual for the long life ritual of the Dalai Lama. The people donated a lot and large quantities of tsamba were also received, so tshog was also offered and the ritual became very large. A kind of an accounting was kept and we also made relations with the trustworthy people. At that time, Alo Chöndze was the main person. And the main person [behind him] was Phala Drönyerchemmo. He was really something.

Q: Drönyerchemmo was there from this time even, right?

A: Oh, yes. The main one who started whatever. In Kalimpong, whatever Jenkhentsisum had done was also done through Drönyerchemmo [Phala] in Lhasa in Norbulinga.

Q: Yes. It was said that the person with whom Jenkhentsisum consulted was Phala Drönyerchemmo.

A: That's right.

Q: So was the first idea that something has to be done outside the idea of Phala Drönyerchemmo?

A: Yes, Drönyerchemmo. And then it was Alo Chöndze. The two of them were friendly toward each other. So Drönyerchemmo would put forward his opinion to Alo Chöndze that the People's Association should gather and oppose [the Chinese]. That's how it started. To tell you the truth, Kudrak are not like the other people, they are well educated and they can plan policies, right? The People's Association was all rash and disorderly and they wouldn't be able to do things like them. Even in the earlier People's Association, they didn't keep the secrets well and that's how they were locked up. So mainly, it was Drönyerchemmo.

Q: When the People's Association began to do the rituals, was that also the idea of Drönyerchemmo?

A: That was kind of policy. In the beginning, the people should be gathered from the religious side and this cannot be done by saying that they are going to oppose the Chinese. So finally it became opposing the Chinese. The Chinese were suspicious thinking that this ritual was not good, but they had no proof. The main person was Drönyerchemmo.

Q: So when you all were gathered for the rituals, how did you get together. Did people from Markham [Tib. smar khams] form a group and people from Litang form another group?

A: Usually, after the ritual was over, then certain trustworthy people whom one could confide in would get together. Alo Chöndze was mainly responsible and about 10 odd people would talk and play mahjong. So in this way the association began. The people who were kind of adventurous [Tib. ya yud chen po] joined the association. So it was kind of hard work that one has to sacrifice

one's life, right? So whether good or bad times they promised to work hard. Andru Gombo Tashi and Alo Chöndze were the main ones. I did the work that I could do, but I couldn't be a leader. Each one has their own thing. One needs education and wisdom. I don't have that. Alo Chöndze was very smart. Andru Gombo Tashi came from a famous family and so had lots of [influence].

Q: The People's Association began, and then you submitted the petition, right?

A: First, the association began and we all [answer not finished].

Q: At this time, was the pledge/oath made? And who was in the association?

A: There were quite a lot of them. However, all the ones who signed were not in this. There were just some of them there. The main meeting took place in Andrusang's house. A petition was made and the 3 went to the Chinese to hand over the petition. So after the 3 were imprisoned, then 3 more were to go. And so there was a promise to continue this without any break [continue sending people with the petition]. The 3 were not imprisoned, but it was said that the Chinese were really furious. However, they let them go. Later, when they were saying that they were going to arrest them, Phala put forward a policy. At this time, there was Trapchi Depön Tashi Berala [Tib. bkra shis dpal rab] who was the type who had really sacrificed their lives when it concerned religion and politics. There were good kudrak and there were some who were just thoughtless.

Q: What I heard was that under Phala there were some who worked with him like Tashi Berala [Tib. bkra shis dpal rab] and Namseling.

A: And a tsendrön.

Q: Tseja Gyentsen la [Tib. rgyal mtshan lags]

A: Yes Tseja, I don't know if he was called Gyentsen la, but his eyes were crooked.

Q: There were a few of them, right?

A: Yes, Yes, that's true.

Q: So did you have any connections with them and meet them?

A: That's why we made the connections with them. You can't directly go and see the Drönyerchemmo Phala all the time. So they had connections here and there in Lhasa.

Q: Did Andru Jinda [Tib. sbyin bdag] [Gombo Tashi] and Namseling meet?

A: Yes, they were close, but they didn't meet frequently. At this time, Tashi Bera and Tseja. What was his name? Was it Gyentsen?

Q: Yes, Tseja Gyentsen. And there was [a monk official] Tenma Jogpala [Tib. bstan ma lcogs pa lags] working with him.

A: Anyway, there was a tsendrön and he was an excellent person who had offered his life [for the cause]. The day before I was to go to India, I went to Norbulinga to see Kungö Chemmo [Drönyerchemmo Phala]. Regarding the documents, I said that if I should be killed then that's it, but until then, I will never let go of them. So Kungö Chemmo trusted me. Andru Jinda [Gombo Tashi] also trusted me very much. There was some talk that the Chinese were going to take Alo Chöndze and the other [two] from the prison. Andru Jinda said that we need some volunteers in case the Chinese would try to take them out of the prison. He came to my house and I said, "Regarding this, Jinda, please don't worry at all. If I were to send my servant or other people, it will be very difficult to have full faith in them. So at that particular time, just call on me and I myself will come." So since that time, he had full faith in me. I heard that he told others that Gyedong is a real reliable person. Before this we hadn't had many relations with Andru Jinda. Alo Chöndze trusted me and he also left all the documents with me right? We were traders and knew each other. As for myself, the work that I did was exactly as I had pledged. I neither withdrew nor did I acted tricky. Because of this, by the grace of the Three Jewels and my lama, my wife and children were all able to come out [to India]. This was not the result of me being capable, but rather the result of being honest, isn't it? I always did my work honestly. Later in the prison, the Chinese [answer not finished]

Q: The association started and what work had to be done?

A: Having meetings to oppose the Chinese and handing over petitions.

Q: Where were the petitions submitted?

A: To the Chinese and to the Kashag. The main Chinese representative at that time was staying at Yuthok. So we went to him.

Q: What was written in the petition?

A: It stated, "Our country Tibet is completely independent and so the Chinese must return. The Tibetan government is politically running the government. You Chinese do not think about staying in Tibet, you must return." So it was like that. We also said all kinds of bad things [against the Chinese]. It's difficult to say exactly.

Q: How many articles were there.

A: Oh, I don't know. Anyway, we said all the worst things. Things the Chinese could not reply to. At first, the 3 of them went to give the petition. The later ones did not have to go.

Q: When they went to submit the petition, did the Kashag do an investigation into this matter?

A: A petition was given to the Kashag, but there was no investigation. The main petition was handed over to the Chinese. The copy was given to the Kashag. So the Kashag did not investigate us. However, to the outside, they have to say things like they [the People's Association] is causing disturbances implying the People's Association is bad. But in reality, they did not do anything to us.

Q: When the petition was given, what did the Chinese say?

A: No reply was given. And they also would not know how to answer it. They can't say that they are not going to return home. Later, when the Chinese said that they were going to imprison them, this (petition) was the reason. Mainly, they said that the People's Association is causing disturbances [Tib. dkrog rkyen bzo] [between Tibet and China] and the Chinese said that they are going to arrest them. So the Kashag said that the Tibetan government will arrest them and if the Chinese arrested them, then there will be a lot of unrest since the People's Association is stupid and will spoil everything. So the Chinese did not have to arrest them and the Kashag had to arrest them and locked them in the police regiment. For 2 to 3 days they were quite strict and they did not allow anyone to go in. Later, we could have contacts with them.

Q: Even though it was called the prison, it seems that they could meet others, right?

A: For about 3 days no one could contact them. They had to be strict because the Chinese were watching them. Later, there was nothing. It was like staying in your own house. Alo Chöndze used to come at night and sleep in his own house and then return early the next morning.

Q: He used to come home and sleep in his house?

A: Yes, to sleep with his wife, and then he returned early in the morning. There was nobody checking into it from the Tibetan government's side. As far as our government was concerned, they had great concern for us and they supported us. We, the People's Association, had risen up and it was mainly for our entire nationality and was not something we did for our private concerns. So it was not strict [in detention]. However, later Shigatse Lhabju died in the prison. At that time, I was not there since I was in India. When I was about to leave the next day for India, the night before I went to the prison and went to talk with them and they were all in tears and I was very sad. I was going to have to forsake Lhasa and leave and the elderly ones were in the prison and the Chinese had brought so much suffering to Tibetans. So it was a good gathering and the next day I left. That morning, I went to see Kungö Phala at Norbulinga. He came to believe in me a lot. I said, "If I would be killed, that's it, but until then I will deliver the documents."

Q: Mostly, the documents were the documents of the People's Association's, right?

A: Yes, there were also letters from various regions all over Tibet that said that the People's Association has had to rise up and oppose the Chinese. The power must be held by the Tibetan government and the people need to rise up and we are going to support you."

Q: Now when you say all over, what regions were included?

A: We have documents that took up a little more than half a load.

Q: Among the documents, there were the letters sent by the leaders of the various regions, right?

A: No. The the People's Association of Shigatse sent letters to us, the People's Association in Lhasa. Then there were letters from Gyantse, from Tö Shelkar [Tib. stod shel dkar] and from Lhoka. So these were the letters from all over.

Q: Now, for example, if there is a letter from Shelkar, were they writing individually or as part of a region?

A: In Shelkar, there would be a kind of a association of the people who were opposing against the Chinese, right? Everyone can't write because the secret will be leaked out, right?

Q: In the letters, did they say that there are such and such number of people from Shelkar sending the letter and was it sealed and signed?

A: Yes. They put their seals on it and sent it. In Tibet, signing things was not in vogue at that time. They would affix their seals to it and say that it is from the People's Association representatives. One won't know whether there are 2 or 3 representatives, right? However, the fact that such letters came from the various regions shows how enthusiastic they were, isn't it? Even we, at Lhasa got very encouraged. We were staying in Lhasa and when we got these letters we felt that we can't stay like this and keep quiet and we have to do something. In this fashion, the various letters arrived from Shigatse, Gyantse, Tö Shelkar and the Lhoka areas. At Lhasa, we had all the documents that showed how the rituals first began; what contributions were made and what kind of rituals were performed for the Dalai Lama. So there was more than half load of documents. It was not just those letters that came from various regions. The documents were written on large Tibetan papers and we didn't even know how to work. However, it was good that everybody was determined and had solidarity and rose against the Chinese. Isn't it? Some people surrendered to the Chinese and started being so cunning. They were from the people and from among the kudrak also and they played up with the Chinese and wondered how they could please them. The People's Association did not do that and this turned out to be very good.

Q: You took the documents and went to Kalimpong, right? When was this?

A: In 1956.

Q: In 1951-54 had you been to Kalimpong?

A: I had come to trade. I had come to trade even in the 1940's. In Kalimpong, I took letters from the Kungö [He worked as Shakabpa's trader] and took them to Lhasa where they were distributed during Mönlam on the 15th day of the 1st month. {this was the famous protest incident in 1956}

Q: This was the Mönlam in 1956, right?

A: No, this was in 1954 perhaps [it was 1956!]. There was a large load of leaflets and when the Mönlam was in session, the people went in quietly into the Jokhang and delivered the leaflets. This was the plan of Phala. The next day when the prayers recessed the monks would come out, right? And there were several thousands of them. So later the Chinese were really [furious]. I brought these flyers from India.

Q: So this was in 54, right?

A: I swear by the Buddha statue in the Jokhang that I don't know. I can't say whether it was 53-54. It was probably 1955. The Chinese were very angry. The Kungö [Jenkhentsisum] made the letters and I brought them from Kalimpong.

Q: The letters were made by Jenkhentsisum, right?

A: Yes.

Q: Were they printed in Kalimpong?

A: Yes. Did you know there was a small machine there?

Q: Is that the hand operated machine?

A: Yes. It was not good like today's machines and it had to be printed one-by-one. So there was one whole load of them.

Q: One load? That's something!

A: Yes. It was packed into a real load [of trade goods] and then I took them to Lhasa. So the leaflets were important, right? So the monks got them in their hands on the 15th day of Mönlam. All the monks came out with papers in their hands. So the Chinese were so angered that they went and took the leaflets out of the hands of the monks. The Chinese had no proof of who made and who brought them. They were not able to do anything. Regarding the leaflets, I brought them safely and I really worked hard.

Q: Later, Gyantse Pejö and those [question not finished]

A: Yes, Champa Wangdü, Champa Tsündrö also came.

Q: What was the reason for their coming [to India]?

A: The three of them came to support Jenkhentsisum's Dedön Tshogpa Association. They volunteered and came to India. Their work was just with the Dedön Tshogpa and it wasn't any separate kind of work.

Q: Were they sent by Drönyerchemmo [Phala]?

A: At Lhasa, obviously, it was the policy of the Drönyerchemmo. They did not come via the normal route of the traders like Yadong, etc. They went to Lhoka and came via Bhutan. At that time, the Bhutanese were very good to us. At Kalimpong, Rani Sahib and they used to help us very well. They would make [us] Bhutanese passes for entry into India. Later, Alo Chöndze also came via Bhutan. It was not easy to enter Bhutan also, but the Bhutanese helped us. I came by the main route (via Sikkim).

Q: At Kalimpong, there was Jenkhentsisum and so what was the reason that the three [monk officials] came. Did Jenkhentsisum need additional workers?

A: They needed some. The Association needed as many people as were available. As I see it, at Kalimpong and in the Association, there was Kungö Datang [Tib. mda' thang]. Shingsar Kungö [Tib. zhing gsar], [was also in Kalimpong], but he probably did not join the Association. Tando [Tib. dar mdo] Rimpoche was in it. Kungö Lobsang Phüntso [Tib. blo bzang phun tshogs], the one who worked in All India Radio was also there.

Q: Do you mean Lhalungpa [Tib. lha lung pa]?

A: Yes, he was there. From Lhasa there was myself, Shelkar Chandzö, a Ganden monk, and Jayan Dawa [Tib. 'jam dbyangs zla ba], who was the one from the previous People's Association. Altogether, there were around 15-16 people in the Dedön Tshogpa. Oh Yes, the lady, Phünkang Lhajang was there.

Q: So in this Dedön Tshogpa, did all of them get together and have your names in it?

A: Yes. All the ones who were in the Dedön Tshogpa had their names and signatures in there. We didn't have salary, but the others like Gyantse Pejö and Champa Wangdü had salary. These were paid by Jenkhentsisum. There were quite a lot of people getting salaries. In our People's Association, Shelkar Chandzö, Jayan Dawa and the Ganden monk all had salaries. They said that they will pay me a salary, but I said I won't take any salary. At that time, I had taken good money with me [from Lhasa]. I told them that I was in good shape so I won't take a salary, but if later I should fall on hard times, then you Kungö must help me. They said, "Yes, by all means". So I didn't take one paisa [penny] of salary. People like Gyalo Thondup know that well.

Q: So were they getting money from donations from the Kalimpong people?

A: No, there were no donations at all.

Q: Then was it coming from Lhasa?

A: I don't know how they were doing it secretly. They said that it was the money of the 3 families-Gyalo Thondup, Shakabpa and the khenjung. They had pooled money and were spending it for the expenditures. I don't know if they were getting it secretly. The Tibetan government had no choice but to send the money. [Note: it was actually from the Indian government's Intelligence Division, see Goldstein A History of Modern Tibet, Volume 3, 2013].

Q: Most probably, it was from there [Tibetan government], right?

A: It must be from there. Expenses have to be met and the salaries have to be paid.

Q: In 1951-55 were there any associations and kyidu clubs in Kalimpong?

A: Yes, there were many, but none were for supporting the Tibetan cause. They [people] had their own ones, like the Pajain Kyidu and Yiten Kyidu.

Q: Which ones?

A: Panjain Kyidu. Even now it is there. Then the Yiten Kyidu or something like that. I think it is also still there.

Q: Were they involved politically.

A: No, not politically. It was just for them to have fun and enjoy themselves. As far as politics, shit! There was nothing. They will see what they can find to eat. As far as politics, its difficult to find any person working on politics.

Q: What I heard was that at Kalimpong, at first, there was Jenkhentsisum. I don't know if Yuthok was there, but Phünkang Lhajang and Alo Chöndze they all worked together. Later, they became separate or something? How did this happen?

A: It happened this way. The main person responsible for getting them separated was Alo Chöndze. When Alo Chöndze came from there [Lhasa], he didn't have even one paisa. He's the type that needs a lot of money. Jenkhentsisum did not have that much money to give him, right? Alo Chöndze became famous in Tibet, right? When the Dalai Lama came to India and returned in 1956, Alo Chöndze was among the people returning to Tibet. Alo Chöndze became strange and later he became a very bad person. When he wanted to go, Kungö Phala said that it won't do to send him to Tibet. [Note: this is incorrect. He simply stayed in India] And so he was kept in India. Then Jenkhentsisum and Alo Chöndze did not get along well. So behind Alo Chöndze, there were Yuthok and Phünkang Lhajang. They sort of made a separate association. This association did not last. Jenkhentsisum had good connections whether it concerned the Indian government or foreign countries. The important persons of the Indian government would not accept them [the Phünkang group]. right?. So Yuthok, Alo Chöndze and Phünkang Lhajang, I don't remember who else were backing them, anyway, they set up a separate tshogpa (association). At that time, Phünkang Lhajang really played up a lot like being show offish. They did not last and later it disappeared.

Q: So Phünkang Lhajang and Shakabpa were not getting along, right?

A: Yes, they didn't get along.

Q: What was the reason.

A: Phünkang Lhajang wanted to know all about the main duties of Jenkhentsisum. Do you understand?

Q: How?

A: You know, Since Phünkang Lhajang is well educated, she wanted to know and see what were the main activities and work of Gyalo Thondup, Shakabpa and Khenjung and how they were making relations. But they didn't want her to know all of these, so they didn't show her those things. They only showed those things to the members who were in the Association. So they used Alo Chöndze and started to separate from the association. At that time, Yuthok was there and then there was Drunyichemmo Angula [Tib. am gug lags]. He later died. So they used Alo Chöndze, but this didn't work. It couldn't last, right? Jenkhentsisum would make all the connections with prominent Indian leaders and the intelligence department, isn't it? They [Phünkang group] were not able to do that. So they didn't get along and that's how they became separate.

Q: What I heard was that when they were together, I think it was the US connection. I heard that this was made first with Yuthok. Later, they didn't get along and Jenkhentsisum took it over.

A: It was not like that. Jenkhentsisum was the first one who made the connections with the foreign countries. People like Litang Athar were dropped [parachuted] because of the foreign connection that they had made. They did it and Phünkang and Yuthok had no connection [with that]. Phünkang and Yuthok were later. If they did have foreign connections, they would use Alo Chöndze and make the connection stronger. It is for sure that it was Gyalo Thondup and Shakabpa right from the beginning who did that. Behind them there was the Indian intelligence office. So they were mainly doing that.

Q: In 1950, the Indian government was not openly supporting Tibet. Since 1950, outside powers were not helping, right? In 1956, when the Dalai Lama came to India, Pandit Nehru was saying that it is better to talk and return, right?

A: Right.

Q: [That was the case] from the government side. Now even if there was no support from the government side, was there a different sort of relation from the Indian intelligence side with Jenkhentsisum?

A: Yes, they were doing that. From the intelligence side, they thought that it was better for the Dalai Lama to stay. The Indian government didn't dare to come out openly. They would have had to challenge the Chinese which was very difficult. In the end, the Dalai Lama had to return. But at this time, if the Dalai Lama wanted to stay, Pandit Nehru was not telling him that he cannot stay, but that it was a difficult situation. From the intelligence department, there was a lot [of connections]. Such things do happen, since it's a country's policy. Kungö Gyalo Thondup, Shakabpa and Lukhangwa were there too, and we did meet prominent Indian leaders. There were these elderly Indians we went to see. I think they were very educated and I heard that they were the advisers to Nehru. They were saying that it has to be done gradually [progress on the Tibet issue]. It was difficult, right? Because the Chinese were too strong.

Q: When you were at Kalimpong from 1950, did you go to any meetings of Jenkhentsisum?

A: There were no regular meetings, just sometimes.

Q: Where did you meet?

A: At Shakabpa's house

Q: Mainly there?

A: Yes. And sometimes they used to meet in Garden Villa, at Kungö Khenjung's place. No matter in whose house one met, in Kalimpong there was not that much fear wherever we held the meeting. Gyalo Thondup was always in Darjeeling, right? They used to call Gyalo Thondup and he used to come. So that's how they used to meet. Later, when Lukhangwa came, he stayed in India mainly. Lukhangwa also insisted and told the Dalai Lama to stay in India, but finally, in the end, nothing came out of it.

Q: What were the meetings about?

A: Like they needed to meet the Indian Officials and there would be all kinds of good and bad things, right? At that time, we were talking and hoping the Indian government would try to help us and make war in Tibet, and Chushigandru was fighting, right?. But the Indian could only secretly help us and they could not actually come out and support us to make war.

Q: During this time what were your thoughts. An association was started outside and what did you think it was going to accomplish, like making war?

A: My thinking was that we cannot handle the Chinese at all. The reason being that in my homeland they made war [against them] with much determination, but they could not handle them. So the idea was to harass or make the Chinese get annoyed [Tib. bsun po bzo] and to show the world that it was against the wishes of the [Tibetan] people. So that's what I used to think and I thought since then, that independence will be very difficult. This is because I am too knowledgeable. In our homeland, there were tremendous fights against the Chinese which were astonishing. Especially in Siling. The Muslim Huhu soldiers of Ma Bufang had passed our homeland in Gansu Lanzhou where there was an iron bridge. The CCP send tens of thousands of soldiers, and so many people were killed that one could not even cross the bridge. All these things we saw at close quarters. So since then, I knew that we can not handle the communists. However, it was just to bother them and not let them stay. So we hoped India might be able to help, but they did not dare to. India herself had a hard time (laughter). So it was hard to find someone to help us. Without the help of someone else, there was no way that we could manage, isn't it? Finally, we could bring the Dalai Lama here, that was well done. This was solely by the grace of the Dalai Lama himself.

Q: So it's just to harass them and to let the outside know?

A: That's it.

Q: So at Kalimpong did many have the feeling that they could have fought and that independence could be achieved?

A: It was difficult. If we had to fight, we don't have the soldiers. The Chinese have such an army and there is no way we could have managed. Anyway, it was just to bother them. But finally it was possible to bring the Dalai Lama out. This was great. It was just wonderful. It was thanks to Kungö Phala. Did you hear that it was Phala who brought the Dalai Lama at night pretending that he was his servant carrying a rifle?

Q: That is correct.

A: The Dalai Lama was holding a gun and pretending that he was Kungö Phala's servant. Just before that Kungö Phala used to go out [in the evening] on patrol and he would ask everywhere, "Is everybody in their positions." The night of the escape, the Dalai Lama pretended that he was the servant of Phala and wore a woolen cap and carried a gun. Phala asked everyone, "Is everybody in their positions?" So to tell you the truth, it was Phala [who was the key]. If Phala was not there, it would have been very difficult. And among the kudrak, there were so many who were giving secrets away to the Chinese and turning toward them. So many of these things happened, isn't it? They could not be trusted. So thanks to Phala that the Dalai Lama was brought out. And previous to this, the Chushigandru revolt began. They could not be faulted because the Chinese said that they will not allow the Khambas and the Amdos to remain. Namseling has written a book; have you seen it?

Q: I have it, but I have not examined it.

A: It says that the Khambas and the Amdos had to go down to their own homeland. So the Khambas and the Amdos could not remain, thinking that one day they will definitely be kicked out. So they were in a position where they had to resort to revolt. So

then they decided to revolt and went to Lhoka. The reason Namseling [Tib. nam sras gling] and Samjola [Tib. bsam mchog lags] went to Lhoka was that they were sent to negotiate at Lhoka with Chushigandru that they should not do like that and should return. Namseling stayed there and Samjola returned. Because Chushigandru was fighting at Lhoka, the road was clear. If that had not occurred, then there was no route [to escape]. It would have been very difficult. This, honestly, Chushigandru did well. In Chushigandru, there were many Amdowas and Ütsang people. And whether it is concerning the Lhoka area [or elsewhere], the people who served [provided for] them were all Ütsang. The food for the people and the fodder for the animals was pooled together by the villages in various estates. So Chushigandru alone can't claim the credit for themselves. What are they going to eat? So, really the people from the 3 provinces worked together.

Q: From Lhasa a lot of the Chushigandru were at Drigutang and at Lhagyari, right? So how did they procure their food?

A: They didn't have much money to buy, so they went ahead and took the fodder for the horses and mules from the miser.

Q: Did the government through Phala Drönyerchemmo say anything to the miser?

A: Oh, he won't be able to say that. That would be very difficult.

Q: So they just used force and took the things, right?

A: It became something that. The miser had to give them because they were afraid. On one hand, they were scared of the Chinese and on the other hand they were scared of the Chushigandru, and so they had to give them the things they wanted. The good Khambas really served well but there were also false Chushigandru [Tib. rdzus ma] who robbed things and did all the bad things. The main leader of this was a person from Derge. I forgot his name, but later Andru Jinda and they caught him and executed him.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yes, the main person was executed. So this was the false Chushigandru. There were two Chushigandru. The real one and the false one. So this is what the false one did. They went and raided everywhere and did all sorts of things. And in the Lhoka all the service was done by the people of Ütsang. And so that's about what happened in Tibet.

Q: Namseling and Samjola went to talk at Drigutang, right? Later the two of them stayed, right?

A: Samjola returned and Namseling stayed.

Q: So Namseling stayed there and did what?

A: They had to lead them and they had to plan a policy together with Andru Jinda. They had to work hard together. Namseling did not return, but Samjola returned and said that they were not listening and that Kungö stayed. So they just said that to the Chinese. The Chinese thought that Namseling and all those people would be able to talk out something, but that was not possible with Namseling because Namseling actually wanted the Khambas to rise up. People like Namseling were really something.

Q: How many times did you go to Kalimpong to carry documents?

A: From Kalimpong, I brought things once.

Q: The one at the Mönlam, right?

A: Yes, and from Lhasa I brought many documents once. Other than that, I only took a few letters in envelopes. Those two were the main ones.

Q: Now if you had to deliver a document to Lhasa, to whom did you have to deliver it?

A: Through Drönyerchemmo.

Q: Do you have to give it directly to Drönyerchemmo or through Tseja?

A: To Lhasa and from there it would be delivered to Norbulinga, right? And from Norbulinga, Drönyerchemmo could contact whoever, right? So when the Mönlam Chemmo was in session, that's the way it was taken there.

Q: What was written in the Mönlam leaflets?

A: It was written that the Chinese have to return China, that Tibet is fully independent, that the Chinese are bullying the Tibetans and all nasty things like this. The Chinese just could not bear that. They did not know who wrote it and who brought the leaflets. It was brought out [distributed] on the 15th day of New Year from Norbulinga to the Jokhang. It was done quietly at night and distributed to the monks. There were no Chinese there. There were thousands of monks and that's how [the leaflets] came out of the Jokhang. These [leaflets] were written by the kungö [Jenkhentsisum]. Mainly it was Shakabpa. Gyalo Thondup stayed mainly at Darjeeling. Anyway, the three kungö did the best they could. The question of independence was very difficult, right? Nobody has been able to accomplish this. However, to have worked so hard is really something, isn't it? And the Chinese told Shakabpa to return and that they were going to make him foreign minister [Tib. phyi srid blon chen]. Kungö never went.

Q: Thank you, Pala, that's about what I have to ask you.

A: How was it?

Q: Very good.

